

The Fraud in Spiritism

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.
The London "Tablet"

AS the propaganda of Spiritism is carried on more and more vigorously and as the number of converts or dupes impressed thereby proportionately increases, it seems desirable to give as much publicity as possible to those cases in which the claims made by the leading exponents of the movement can be shown, upon unimpeachable evidence, to be unworthy of credit. Few of the alleged phenomena of Spiritism make a greater appeal to the popular mind than those so called "spirit photographs," in which, beside the sitter posing for his portrait, appear the shadowy features of some more or less unexpected visitant from the other world. The voices or rappings heard in the seance-room cannot well be reproduced in a way that brings their import home to the man in the street, but the spirit forms which leave the blurred traces of their presence upon the negative in the camera, without, so we are assured, the possibility of trickery or error or deception, constitute a type of evidence which is very general in its appeal. It is almost like seeing for ourselves, and seeing, we are told, is believing.

A SURPRISING INSTANCE

Are spirit photographs possible? That is a question. I do not feel competent to answer, and it is extremely important in all this matter to avoid rash generalizations. There has been an extraordinary amount of fraud in spirit photography, and all specialists in the subject—men like Mr. William Marriott, Mr. Patrick and Dr. Whately Smith—dilate upon the endless variety of dodges by which these faked results may be obtained. One of the most surprising stories known to me of a spirit who had apparently allowed himself to be caught by the camera comes upon the authority of the Rev. Charles Tweedale vicar of Weston, near Otley, in Yorkshire. He and his wife (who is a very psychic person) and their son, Merschel, were at luncheon one day—there is none of the glamor of twilight here, in December, 1915, when Mrs. Tweedale saw the apparition of a man, with a full head

of hair and a beard, standing on the left hand of her son and in close proximity to the piano. She told her husband and son what she saw, but neither of them could perceive anything. Then Mr. Tweedale went out and fetched his camera. No other person was present, a plate was taken from a new box of quarter-plates which had not been previously exposed, and Mr. Tweedale then photographed the spot where his wife declared that she still saw the apparition. The negative, which never left Mr. Tweedale's possession, was at once developed by him, and showed beside his son the figure of a man with a good head of hair and beard. Moreover, the man's head in the photograph completely hides that part of the piano which lies behind it. Two months later Mr. Tweedale, his wife and son went before a commissioner of oaths at Otley and swore an affidavit of the exact truth of the facts testified to by each of them severally. It is reproduced in Mr. Tweedale's book, "Man's Survival After Death" (pp. 387 seq.). Supposing the account, which I have only summarized here, to be accurate, it seems very difficult to propound any natural explanation, and although there are many barely credible experiences recounted in the volume named, one would be loath to suggest that an Anglican clergyman, his wife and son had all, without any adequate motive, joined in a conspiracy to commit perjury. It is, however, to be noted that the *Council of the Society for Psychical Research*, when the case was submitted to them, seem to have decided that the matter would not repay fuller investigation. I only quote it here as an example of spirit photography which it is not easy to explain without attributing a very extraordinary range to the possibilities of mere coincidence.

CASES APPEALED TO

But the cases appealed to by the advocates of Spiritism in proof of survival, or of the current theory of ectoplasm, are mostly of a very different kind. Moreover, the propagandists are good enough to tell us where inquirers, normally speaking, can obtain such photographs for themselves. They should put themselves in communication with the "Crewe circle," of which the principal representatives are Mr. William Hope and Mrs. Buxton. You

obtain an appointment with these two mediums; you bring your own plates; you sit for your photograph, and, if you are reasonably lucky, upon one or other of the negatives so taken there will appear an "extra" of some spirit presence which was hovering around you at the moment when the camera did its work. This was the experience of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; this also the experience of Lady Glenconner, or, as we should now say, Viscountess Grey; this was the experience of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Wynn and of others too numerous to mention. Of course, the "extra" thus appearing does not always prove to be a likeness of the person most desired or expected. Lady Glenconner, for example, on one occasion found the image of a stranger on her plate. In inquiry it proved that the youth so delineated was the son of two bereaved parents who had visited Crewe a few days before. Owing to "bad conditions" the experiment had then been a failure, but the persevering spirit, hanging around the neighborhood, had succeeded shortly afterwards in getting on to the plate of Lady Glenconner. Again, Mr. Walter Wynn, a Nonconformist clergyman, had gone to Crewe with his wife, in the hope of obtaining an extra of his son, killed in the war. This was denied them, but by way of compensation the spirits adorned their negative with two vignettes, upside down, of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone. The likeness of Mr. Gladstone was admitted, but Lord Gladstone, to whom Mr. Walter Wynn promptly wrote to announce this wonderful event, repudiated any recognition of the features of his mother. He also declared that "examination through a magnifying glass of the photograph of my father makes it pretty certain that it is a photograph of a drawing." This was perhaps unkind of Lord Gladstone, but Mr. Wynn has had his revenge by announcing to a large public through the *British Man and Woman* that the spirit of Mr. Gladstone, having apparently forsaken the Church of England, now comes to listen to Mr. Wynn in his Nonconformist pulpit, and has more than once been seen by psychics hovering over the preacher in moments of inspiration. But to return to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's own experiences.

I have (he writes) myself been to Crewe, and have had

results which would be amazing were it not that familiarity blunts the mind to miracles. Three marked plates, brought by myself, and handled, developed, and fixed by no hand but mine, gave psychic extras. In each case I saw the extra in the negative when it was still wet in the dark room. * * * I trust that I make it clear that no hand but mine ever touched this plate, nor did I ever lose sight of it for a second save when it was in the carrier, which was conveyed straight back to the dark room and there opened. What has any critic to say to that?

Well, Mr. Harry Price, whose paper in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (May, 1922) has recently been given wide publicity in the columns of *Truth*, has a good deal to say on the subject. Sir Arthur informs us that "when Mr. Hope and Mrs. Buxton stand with their hands joined over the cap of the camera they are really throwing out a misty ectoplasm, from which the forms loom up which appear upon the photographic plate." Mr. Price also describes the same manoeuvre: "While the exposures were going on," he says, "Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Hope buried their heads in the sides of the focussing cloth as though in prayer, and kept contact with the camera." But the spirits in the latter case do not seem to have been troubling about "misty ectoplasm." They had no occasion to, for in the dark-slide which was being exposed in the camera were two plates, not belonging to the set Mr. Price had brought with him, but prepared beforehand by Mr. Hope, and provided with an extra before the exposure took place. Although ninety-nine men in a hundred in Mr. Price's place would probably have been satisfied, as Sir Arthur Doyle was satisfied, and as Mr. Wynn was satisfied, that the plates had been brought, handled and developed by no other hand but theirs, in point of fact the dark-slide in the camera was not the dark-slide into which the plates brought had been put. The proof, in Mr. Price's case, is overwhelming and absolutely unanswerable.

FRAUD EXPOSED

Before keeping his appointment with Hope Mr. Price had gone to the Imperial Dry Plate Co., Ltd., and had arranged that each plate of the whole packet of six should

be marked by means of the X-rays with a section of the figure of a lion rampant (the trade-mark of the company). Two plates were exposed, and two negatives of the sitter (Mr. Price himself) were thus taken. On one of them appeared an extra; on the other only the ordinary portrait; on neither the slightest trace of the lion rampant. The extra consisted of a woman's face with the ordinary shadowy veiling around it. The negative with the extra, according to the rules of the Crewe circle, had to be left with Hope. Mr. Price was only allowed to carry away prints of this. But, in the case of the other plate, the negative itself was given him at his request, and he was able to examine it in his leisure, and to prove that no trace existed of the X-ray markings which identified it. The trick by which the fraud was perpetrated was as simple as it was audacious. Mr. Price was invited, in the dark room, to put two of his plates into the dark-slide. He did so, and was bidden meanwhile to do up the packet again. As he was engaged upon this he saw Hope turn half round, put the dark-slide into his breast pocket for a moment and then take it out again, or rather, in its place, another already prepared. The fact of the substitution was made clear to Mr. Price because he had secretly marked the slide which was first shown him, and when he was asked to take it back to the camera he made an excuse to look at it, and saw that his marks were not there. It is noteworthy that Mr. Hope and Mrs. Buxton opened the proceedings with a short religious service. Mrs. Buxton sang the hymn "Nearer, My God to Thee." Mr. Hope delivered himself of an extempore prayer, and all present joined in the "Our Father." As *Truth* very reasonably comments: "A more nauseous picture of canting hypocrisy was never presented to the world than that of this precious pair singing hymns and praying to the Almighty to bless their efforts to swindle their dupes. Stiggins was an angel of light by comparison." And yet these are the kind of intermediaries to whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Professor Henslow, the late Archdeacon Colley, the Rev. Walter Wynn, and Lady Grey bid us address ourselves to obtain true guidance upon the deepest problems of man's moral existence and future destiny.

The Ouija Board

ERNEST HULL, S.J.

The Bombay "Examiner"

SIR: A friend of mine has bought a planchette: a small table with 2 legs and a pencil as 3rd leg. I have read the instructions; and I trust you know this apparatus. Will you let me know whether I should advise the friend to throw it away as really an evil thing. You will also kindly let me know the evil effects of this instrument; whether it will shake the Faith, and whether it is really spiritistic.

Yours, etc.

Father Hull, the editor of the *Examiner*, made the following comment on the foregoing letter:

The planchette, in spite of many and varied attempts to explain it, still remains a puzzle, and will so remain till a body of scientific investigators take the matter in hand and, by thousands of varied experiments, build up an induction. The explanations offered fall into two classes: (1) Of those who believe that it works under the agency of "spirits," which would make it a forbidden instrument to Catholics, and (2) of those who believe it to be worked by the subliminal consciousness of the operator, in which case it would be merely a bit of weird fun.

This much, however, is to be said from a practical point of view: Whether there is "devil" or spirit in it or not, playing with these occult things works mischief to the operator. Experts have gathered enough experience and published enough of it to show that people who dabble in "seances," or try methods of "raising the spirits" privately, gradually get into a morbid condition of mind, and this soon reacts both on the character and the nervous system.

The effect is analogous to that of certain other vices, such as drink, the drug habit, and even gambling. Drink and the drug habit produce their physical effects first: a bodily want and craving for further indulgence; and absorption in this craving reacts on the mind, character and habits of life and produces an all-round degeneration. Gambling, on the other hand, first affects the mind and feelings, and afterwards produces a craving which becomes

almost physical, and unstrings and unnerves a man, and renders him a maddened and disintegrated creature.

The passion for the occult, whether spiritistic or hypnotic, seems to be still more mischievous. It combines all the evil effects of those other three vices, mental, moral and physical; and this deeper down, in the very roots of a man's personality. The mental straining after an elusive object, very problematical and difficult to attain, has a shattering effect on the nervous system; the intense absorption involves a serious amount of wear and tear and a draining of the vital energy. The mind, wholly occupied in the quest, is unable to give its whole attention to any other object. The will, bent strenuously in one direction, and exclusively concentrated on one line of pursuit, ceases to feel any sustained interest in other directions. The result is a far more radical demoralization than usually results from those other vicious habits, and a wreckage, often irreparable, of the mental, moral and physical constitution.

A man who merely visits one seance out of curiosity, or toys with a planchette now and then for fun, is not perhaps putting himself in danger of immediate injury. But if the first experiment proves successful and interest and a desire for more are evoked, then the danger begins. The man has set his foot on an inclined plane; and unless, with a smart check, he draws back he is quite likely to slide down the gradient, and the further he slides the more difficult it becomes to stop. As in the material world there is the acceleration-law of falling bodies; so in the spiritual world there is a similar acceleration-law of falling souls. When once the run-down has begun it continues with increasing speed, and the only prospect before the descending soul is the same as that before the descending body. It can only be stopped by a crash which, in arresting it, breaks it to pieces; or it reaches the end of the incline only to plunge into the abyss of final ruin. Cases are on record of people who began innocently enough, and had the sense to stop in time when only partially wrecked. But other cases reveal the total inability to draw back, and consequent ruin, issuing sometimes in madness and premature death.

So one's advice can be expressed in brief thus: *Obsta principiis*; have nothing to do with the accursed thing, whether spiritistic or hypnotic.

Centenary of the Jesuits of Missouri

Sermon of Archbishop Glennon at St. Francis Xavier (College) Church, Sunday, May 20, 1923, at the Centenary Celebration of the Coming of the Jesuits to Missouri.

"Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Alleluia."—Pentecost Versicle.

SOME events are turning points in history, and some are even more important in this that they mark the beginning of a new era.

To this latter class belongs that event which transpired when Ignatius of Loyola, the crippled soldier of Spain, gathered his fellow followers at Montmartre in 1535 and, at their head and with them, took those vows, ordinary and special, which would make them the companions of Jesus and henceforth His kingdom's bravest defenders.

No turning point was this, but a challenge in a new way to all the world that stood against Christ.

Similarly, too, though in a lesser way, yet for Western America just as important, was the advent to the banks of the Mississippi of a group of followers that claimed Ignatius as their chief. In their hearts was the elemental strength, spiritual fervor; the courage and the daring that inspired the hearts of the Montmartre group, and just as high the purpose that inspired their coming.

It was in the year 1823, on the 31st of May—just 100 years ago—when there came from their impoverished home in Maryland two Fathers and seven novices on their long journey westward. Let us pronounce the names again: Rev. Charles Van Quickenborne, Superior; Rev. Peter J. Timmermans, his assistant, and F. J. Van Assche, P. J. De Smet, J. A. Elet, F. L. Verreydt, P. J. Verhaegen, J. B. Smedts and J. De Maillet, novices.

As they reached the banks of the mighty river their weary minds must have turned in gratitude to Almighty God, who had brought them through much trial to their

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journey's end. Here was the river that their own Marquette had discovered; and now they were to cross there where he had passed 150 years before. The town that lay before them was still a frontier town. Its 5,000 inhabitants, mostly Catholic, with their Bishop as their head, were about to celebrate with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament (music and cannon accompanying) the great feast of Corpus Christi, the octave of the feast falling on that day. In that procession the Jesuit band had an honored place. It must have appealed to them with special significance, for were they not the company of Jesus, and were they not at their journey's end still His companions, still the soldiers of the Eucharistic King as He was carried in triumph amongst His people?

In a few days they had wandered out as far as Florissant, there henceforth to live and there henceforth to find a home.

I have said that their coming marked a new era for the West. But just as all great spiritual movements have beginnings in poverty and humility; just as the Christ was born in Bethlehem, where there was only a stable to shelter Him; just as at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles assembled in a dingy room, so was it with this hopeful band. There were twelve in number, but their only home at Florissant, and even it was not prepared to receive them, was a log cabin measuring sixteen by eighteen feet. It had one door, a couple of windows from which the glass had vanished, and, under the comb of the roof, a crude loft or garret to serve as a dormitory.

I will leave to your imagination how priests, novices and lay brothers, twelve in number, were able to find a place to sleep, to cook the food which had not yet arrived and for which they were dependent on the goodness of the Blessed Mother Duchesne, who was a neighbor of theirs, and how they could further utilize the cabin as a community room, a house of studies, a chapel—all in a space of sixteen by eighteen feet, with a garret superimposed.

If poverty be an outward sign of Divine benediction, I know of no community that should be more blessed than they. Yet in this humble habitation was the stored-up

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energy which has ever since been expanding, and which, far from being exhausted, is like the quality of mercy, never confined, and, like the charity of God, ever urges onward.

Great have been the accomplishments of the Jesuit Fathers of this Province, vast their energies, mighty their exploits, grand their institutions, learned their men, and mighty the spiritual empire they have builded; yet it is today for every member of this Province, whatever their work may be, whether on the blazing sands of India or in the forests of British Honduras, or in the Indian wigwam in the mountain passes, whether in halls of learning or beneath the fretted roofs of famed sanctuaries, to turn to the old home whence has come the source of their inspiration, of their greatness, and, under God's benediction, all their success: dear old Florissant.

You would not expect me, brethren, to tell you today the long story of these hundred years of achievement. It would take a lifetime to collate the facts. It has already been the subject of chronicle and story in more books than I have today of minutes at my disposal; and the story is not yet written. I am left then as one in a vast garden whose duty is to exhibit that garden with all its rich fruits and bright flowers before you. I can only say to you, you too may walk in this garden, you too may study its history and you too may admire the flowers on the way and enjoy the abundant fruits. Then you can do as I would do now—take therefrom a bouquet of immortelles and bear it with you as you go that, in your life journey, you too may be blessed with the aroma of the flowers that have been planted by the companions of Christ.

It is said that the Jesuits are the first teaching Order in the world; and surely the same will apply in a special manner to this Province of the Society. In their cabin home at Florissant they commenced by taking a few Indian boys to wean them from the forest trail with its orgies and superstitions to walk henceforth in the ways of the great Spirit: then on to St. Louis to take up the college that was struggling here under the fitful and uncertain care that a few secular priests were able to give

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it. That college they assumed charge of in 1826, and under their ministration it grew year by year until today it is the wide-spreading group of schools that compose the great St. Louis University.

The Jesuit Order has its "*ratio studiorum*." It is the outcome of the mind and heart of their founder. The Fathers have preserved it as their norm of teaching, modified, if you will, but unchanged in principle for three hundred years, and still it stands as the norm of true education. Following it they will teach their youth to speak, and that is rhetoric. They will teach their youth to grow in the knowledge and love of truth, and that is philosophy. They will teach their youth, as the beginning and the crown of all, to know and to love God, and that is theology.

Statistics may tell in a formal way of their great success; but statistics, after all, furnish poor standards of judging the worth of the thing itself. A 1,000 teachers, 20,000 pupils in high school, college and university, 5 universities in which to teach them and 16 colleges and 15 high schools is the outward evidence of the work done by the Jesuit Fathers in this Province in 100 years. Worthy it is of all praise; surely deserving of our admiration and of God's benediction.

I have said their coming marks a new era; and I think these statistics prove that their coming marked at least a new era for Catholic education. But, beyond the statistics, it may well be asked, What are the results? Have their efforts produced a new era of thought? Have they influenced the public mind? What evidence have we of their accomplishments among the people and in the land in which it was inaugurated?

There be those who claim that our Catholic education counts for little, that its results are negligible, that the public thought swings from it, that the world works without it and heeds it not. I suspect also that there are many who would like to have this estimate of values admitted, even if not true.

Now when we look at the Mississippi River we are thinking only of its rushing waters. We little think of the banks that confine it, of the levees planted along the

way to guard the farms and the homes that lie beyond. So also, when estimating the trend of thought and life today, we are liable to consider the foam and the froth of its ever hurrying movement and give little attention to the substantial barricades erected to direct those lives and direct that thought in the way they should go, and to the end that their movement shall be straight and efficient. Little thought do we give to the process of purification up there at the source or to the devices along the way to deepen and make serviceable that river of life.

So with Catholic education. It may not be much in evidence where the froth and foam is, but it is working there, in home and hall, purifying, strengthening, ennobling those who are its recipients, directing their ways, so that they may serve as they go, and that every day their life flow may ripple in the sunshine of heaven.

But who can give us statistics on these things? The record of our devotion to Catholic education is up there in the book of life, written by Him who has said to us: "Suffer little children to come to Me"; and we, listening, help to set them on the way that leads to Him.

The Jesuit Father is not only a teacher of youth, a director of schools, a creator of universities; in other lines he works for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Christ. He is a missionary.

I have no doubt you would deem my few remarks incomplete if I did not call to mind today that chapter of Jesuit history, so appealingly beautiful, so spiritually romantic, so daring and so successful, wherein, at the call of the Indians of the Far West, the Jesuit "black-robe" faced that strange land and failed not until he reached the placid waters of the Western Sea. You will remember that the call to the Jesuit Fathers to come to the West was particularly that they would evangelize the Indian tribes. For seventeen years after their arrival they had waited with their first mission unaccomplished. But the purpose that inspired them still was reassured in their hearts. One, two, three delegations came from the Indian tribes of the Rocky Mountains, imploring the presence of the "black-robe," praying that he would come to save them.

And now their call is answered in 1840. Father De Smet starts on his long journey; perils by water and by land were his to meet. From flat boat to cart over hill and plain, amidst the buffaloes—patriarchs of the plains, and the multitudinous denizens of the primeval forests—with no protection from the heat of day or the cold by night, with no food except the salted meat, and no drink at times except the stale water of the plains, and still ever upward to the mountains beyond until, at last, travel stained and weary, the "black-robe" salute the children of the forest.

Not difficult is it, indeed (for he has left us the materials), to reconstruct these scenes that stand unique in American missionary annals?

Between the hills that look eternal, down by the running waters of the stream, stands the village of the "Flat-heads"; their numerous tepees surround the central plateau where the council is held. They have sent out their boldest chiefs to meet the approaching "black-robe." Silently they rise as he enters the place of council. The old men weep for joy, while the children join hands in delight. He is led to the place of honor. Solemnly the great chief, "Big Face," arises. Black-robe [he says], welcome to my nation. Our hearts rejoice today because the great Spirit has granted our petition. From the Far East in years gone by we heard of that great Spirit, and in our wanderings I have exhorted my children to love Him because He is great and good. Now, in His name, you come, O, black-robe! Our desire is to know what we must do to please the great Spirit. Black-robe, speak. We are your children. Show us the path we must follow to reach where the Spirit lives. Our ears are open. Our hearts will heed your words. Speak, black-robe.

The black-robe rises. He is the only white man for hundreds of miles; for he has come a distance of 2,000 miles or more, and now his heart's desire is gratified. He tells them of the great Spirit and of His laws. He brings them from the war dance to the ways of peace. He tells them they must love and not hate—yea, even love their enemies. He lifts before them the cross. He teaches them to sing the praises of God. In a few days, even

from his first arrival, the Indians promise to stay with him and to follow his teachings unto death. He remains with them long enough to instruct and baptize them. He teaches them how to pray in common. It is the early morning, and the chieftain, who has already called them together with the sun's rise, leads, and there in the forest primeval the hearts that beneath it formerly leaped at the summons to battle now sing in peace the praises of the Maker, and ask for them and theirs His constant benediction.

Father De Smet's way from village to village was a triumphant tour of the cross. He not only taught the Indians the way of God, but he also trained them in the methods of civilized life. He induced among them that settled order of living which they had never known. His work was to remain, and even to this day his name is hailed as blessed in all that western land. A hundred and eighty thousand miles he has traveled; then leaving to other hands his beloved Indians of the West he himself returned to lay down his burden and sleep at Florissant with the Fathers.

If the West today is streaked with the light of Faith, if the villages of the plains nestle in the shadow of the cross, if that same cross stands resplendent in the glory of the mountains, it was De Smet and his followers who blazed the way, who carried that cross, and, in its exaltation, set up the reign of the Crucified One over the mountain and the plain.

But the Jesuit Father is not alone teacher and missionary; his is the duty to fight the battle of Faith wherever along the battle line that sacred cause needs defenders. In the language of St. Paul: "He becomes all things to all men in order to gain all to Christ." He is the priest at the altar, breaking the bread of life to the little ones. He is the preacher in the pulpit, proclaiming the gospel of the Saviour, exhorting, appealing, encouraging, as Smarius did and Damen and Weninger, the echoes of whose voices still linger. He is a missionary in the field, preaching from church to church. He is the pastor of souls, guarding well his flock; the writer of books, the exponent of truths, the master of arts, the director

of souls, the conductor of retreats, the friend of men, the servant of God.

There is in the pursuit of his life's calling a variety—a Divine restlessness and a consecration. Now he is teaching the boys how to work and how to play; now in the criminal's cell, bringing to the unfortunate some ray of hope, some evidence of Divine mercy; or, again, he is insistently directing some rare soul along the mystic way that brings it to the elect of God.

It is because of this Divine restlessness that the Jesuit Fathers have been subjected to criticism; and, indeed, they should plead guilty. The people are angry with them, for they have disturbed the fretted conscience of the world. In season and out of season they have importuned, sought and struggled with that wayward conscience, which would escape if it could, resentful of interference, even though that interference be for its salvation. It would escape; but, like "The Hound of Heaven," there is one to pursue it down the "labyrinthine ways" of its own foolish speculations. There is one to follow it amidst tears or laughter and plead with it in the Saviour's name. Why abandon, why betray Him, for in betraying Him it betrays all?

That world conscience has swept down the titanic gloom of war and sought comfort amidst tombs and memories, has turned from the sky above to the valleys below, has sought in conquering space to reach the "margent of the world." Vain are its pursuits, empty its victories, for it fled the Master, and in doing so has lost home and hope. At the end it must turn and listen to the voice that insistently pursues, for it is the voice of the Messenger of truth. It must yield to the power that created it, and return a weary prodigal to His Father's home.

I join with you in praying that the Jesuit Community may long continue Divinely restless in its Divinely appointed task; that with "unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy" of the Master His companions may still fret the world's conscience; still, in His name, heal the wounds of society; still inform the minds of men; still teach and preach and pray for an erring world and lead it back to Christ.

The Morality of Betting

REV. T. SLATER, S.J.

The Liverpool "Catholic Times"

GREAT excitement has been caused by the Government's proposal to tax betting transactions. Mr. Snowden denounced it in the House of Commons, several Nonconformist religious bodies have declared that they are opposed to it, and even some sections of the Church of England have raised their voice against it. The chief objection against the proposal, and the only one which concerns us here, is that the proposed taxation would be against sound morality. A writer in the *Guardian* acknowledged that it was difficult to draw the line between a bet which is harmless and gambling which is ruinous, but he would have the moralist decline to attempt to draw such a line; he quoted Pascal to the effect that the heart has reasons of which the intellect knows nothing.

But, surely, if we want sound ethics we must appeal to reason and not to sentiment. It is often difficult to draw the line between what is right and what is wrong, but there is no other way of obtaining a code of rational morality. All right rules of conduct are a mean between two vicious extremes. The right use of money is the mean between stinginess and extravagance, and so with all virtues except Divine charity. Divine charity is the end of all virtue; it is the measure of all virtue, and we cannot have too much of it. But of all other virtues we may have too much as well as too little, and so if we want to have moral rules for the guidance of our conduct, we must necessarily draw the line, separate what is defective from what is excessive, and thus define what is right and what is wrong.

BETTING NOT NECESSARILY WRONG

Betting is not necessarily wrong. A man intends to go on a short holiday at the week-end. On Friday morning he says to a friend: "I think it will be a fine day tomorrow." The friend prides himself on being weather-wise and he answers: "I'll bet you a shilling that it will rain." "Done," said the other. "I'll take your bet." Few

people would maintain that such a bet as this is morally wrong. We suppose that both parties can spare a shilling, that both intend to pay if they lose, that nobody suffers in consequence of the bet. As one might give the other a shilling as a present if he chose, so he may pay a shilling to the other according to agreement, because he was wrong in his forecast of the weather.

But, as everybody knows, betting is liable to abuse. Money may be staked of which the bettor has not the free disposal, or more than he can afford. If he loses his bet he may be ruined, or he may be sorely tempted to commit theft or fraud in order to get wherewith to pay. Frequent betting becomes gambling, and a very dangerous habit is formed. Gambling encourages idleness, leads people into bad company, and very frequently ends in ruin. Gambling, then, or playing for high stakes, is usually wrong for one reason or another. In other words, betting may be unobjectionable from the point of view of morality, if it is indulged in sparingly and under certain conditions. It may be compared to drinking intoxicating liquor. It is not wrong to drink a glass or two of beer or wine if you can afford it; it is wrong to drink to excess or more than you can afford to pay for. It was necessary to try to get clear notions about the morality of betting before going on to consider the question of the morality of the taxation of betting. The two questions are connected, but they are not identical. With regard to an institution which is certainly immoral I can well imagine a most moral Government saying to itself: I cannot suppress you, if I attempted to do so I should probably do more harm than good. But I know that you are making a great deal of money. I will tax you, and that, at any rate, will have the good effect of diminishing your profits, and preventing others perhaps from imitating your example, induced thereto by the hope of realizing the excessive profits which you realize at present.

NOTHING MORALLY OBJECTIONABLE

Is there, then, anything objectionable, from the point of view of sound morality, to the proposal of the Government to tax betting transactions? I cannot see that there

is anything objectionable to the proposal. As to the assertion of Mr. Snowdon that the proposed tax would patronize, legalize and make respectable one of the greatest curses of the country, I must say that I fail to see it. After all, to tax a man is hardly to patronize him or make him respectable. Such an argument may come well enough from his Majesty's Opposition in the House of Commons, but it hardly produces conviction when it is read calmly in the quiet atmosphere of one's room. The taxation of intoxicating liquor offers a complete parallel. In the case of intoxicating liquor, taxation does not patronize or legalize drunkenness, or make it respectable; how, then, could taxation patronize or legalize gambling, or make it respectable? Without qualms of conscience on the part of the most scrupulous, the Government obtains a large annual revenue from the taxation of intoxicating liquor; why should it not endeavor to raise a little money by the taxation of betting? Drinking intoxicating liquor is a luxury and so is betting.

France's Catholic Peasantry

FRANCOIS VEUILLOT

IT is being remarked by bilious and pessimistic people that a twofold curse menaces the peasant population of France—religious indifference and the steady migration toward the towns. The evil is, of course, much magnified, though for all that certain provinces give a color to these alarming prognostications. The countryside, after having long resisted materialistic evolution and anti-clerical politics, finds itself invaded by these two tendencies at the very time when the latter are beginning to lose ground.

But what a fair-minded observer might add to that affirmation is that a generous effort is at present being made by the Catholics and the sanest party in the country districts to struggle against the danger. The French race has sufficiently preserved its common sense, its Christian

tradition and its elasticity to enable it to defend itself and come to its right senses.

Three weeks ago there was an indication of that happy moment at the general council of the Catholic Young People's Association. That powerful organization, of which the first members were recruited from the student body, tends more and more to develop in the country. It has a good proportion of rural branches, and is considerably occupied with agricultural problems. This enthusiastic portion, acting through two rural federations, recently held simultaneous congresses—one openly Catholic and religious; the other purely professional, though directed by Christians and animated by the Christian spirit.

These two meetings deserve more than passing mention. The Catholic Agricultural Union of France has been holding its annual pilgrimage to the Sacred Heart of Montmartre. Numerous provinces sent their delegates, among them some who would not be looked upon as strictly religious. The Bretons, for their part, were under the leadership of the Bishop of Quimper—a thousand of them, many wearing the ancient traditional costume. They profited by their stay in Paris to go in a body to the tomb of the Unknown Warrior, and chanted the *De Profundis* under the *Arc de Triomphe*.

The ceremony at Montmartre was very touching. Mass was celebrated at midnight, and the first day ended with the consecration of rural France to the Sacred Heart. During the sessions it was shown that five new diocesan unions have joined the association during the past year, while the retreat movement is making enormous progress.

While this congress was going on the Central Union of French Agricultural Syndicates was also meeting in annual assembly. The Catholic federation is not directly interested in syndical questions. But the syndical association, which is more strictly professional, is not afraid to go outside its strict limits when it is a question of the moral benefit of its members. As M. Delalande, its president, said in his closing address, it is essential to work for bettering the life of the French peasants, to elevate their

minds, and the syndicate should inculcate the sense of duty and devotion.

M. Delalande is, by the way, an excellent Catholic, as are most of his colleagues.

From the economic point of view the Central Union has produced the happiest results, as certain figures will show much better than any comment. The membership has doubled in the past three years, and is now more than a million. Of the 65,000 agricultural syndicates in France it included some 5,000. The Midlands Union, which is one of the finest rural inspirations of recent years, has for one of its directors M. Anglade, who is also one of the promoters of the Catholic Union.

The central cooperative branch of the Union has increased its turnover from three and a half million francs in 1919 to fifteen millions last year. Last year 765,000 francs were granted in loans, three times the amount of the previous year; while during last year 280 new fire policies were taken out.

There is, on the whole, then little room for despairing of the future of the French countryside.